

California Department of Health Services Institutions Program

GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF DISEASE AT PETTING ZOOS, ANIMAL EXHIBITS OR OTHER AREAS WHERE THE PUBLIC MAY HAVE CONTACT WITH FARM ANIMALS

This is intended to provide information for those persons who are responsible for managing petting zoos, animal exhibits or other animal contact areas. Use of these simple precautions will reduce the risk of E. Coli or other infectious diseases in areas where the public may have contact with animals and their environment. The attached Appendix provides pictures, diagrams, and figures to accompany the written materials. A public education brochure is also included in this package.

Background

Infectious diseases can be transmitted to humans by many types of animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens or pets such as dogs, cats, bird, reptiles and other exotic species. Wildlife such as bats, skunks, raccoons and rabbits can also transmit disease to humans. The primary infectious agents of concern in animal contact settings include *Salmonella*, *E.Coli*, *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*. These diseases may be passed in animal feces and transmitted to humans via direct or indirect fecal-oral contact. Direct fecal-oral transmission may occur when animals as a result of petting or touching the animals. Indirect fecal-oral transmission can occur if fecal materials contaminate water or surfaces (fencing, ground).

Disease Prevention Measures

Hand Washing Stations

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued guidelines for minimizing the risk of E.Coli outbreaks at petting zoos and other venues where contact with farm animals and their environment may occur. The CDC has advised that hand washing is the best method to prevent the transmission of E. Coli and other enteric pathogens.

Hand Sanitizers

At this time, hand sanitizers have not been demonstrated to be as effective as hand washing. CDC has advised that hand washing is the best method. However, hand sanitizers can be used in conjunction with hand washing to provide an additional hygienic measure. Therefore, hand sanitizers should only be used in conjunction with hand washing stations.

Location of Hand Washing Stations

Hand washing stations should be provided in all animal-visiting areas (animal exhibits and petting zoos) so that animal handlers and visitors can wash their hands. Hand washing stations should be conveniently located in high traffic areas where the public is exiting the animal areas or petting zoos. (See Appendix - Diagram A).

Hand washing stations should also be provided adjacent to all food concessions located in livestock areas such as 4-H food booths. Consideration should also be given to providing additional hand washing stations in food concession areas and/or posting signs reminding patrons to wash hands before consuming food and beverages.

Hand washing stations should be located in areas with high visibility. Signs can be used to direct visitors to the hand wash locations.

Structural Development of Hand Washing Stations

When possible, hand washing stations should be located in an area that can afford connection to running water and sanitary sewer. This will avoid increased costs and maintenance issues associated with filling fresh water tanks and the pumping of holding tanks. If a suitable location cannot be located with sewer and water connections then a maintenance schedule, including pumping schedule, should be established. Maintenance should also include routine cleaning and restocking of supplies.

Hot water does not have to be provided to the hand washing sinks. However, it has been found that providing a tempered water supply will encourage proper hand washing practices.

Running water should be of sufficient volume and pressure to remove soil from hands. Volume and pressure may be significantly reduced if the water supply is furnished from a holding tank rather than a unit that is connected to a permanent water supply under pressure. The design of the hand wash unit should leave the

hands free for hand washing. (Stations with foot or hand pump features are less desirable in this regard).

Since young children are most at risk for transmission of enteric pathogens, sink units should be designed for children's height in addition to standard adult height sinks.

Building materials should be durable and nonabsorbent. Construction of the units should ensure that sinks and drainboards could be easily cleaned and maintained in a sanitary manner and consistent with plumbing code requirements. The use of stainless steel for construction of the hand wash stations may not be desirable in locations exposed to the sun.

Dispensers for soap and towels should be available at hand washing stations. If the hand washing stations are supplied with only cold water a soap that emulsifies more easily in cold water should be provided (check with your local supplier).

Refer to the attached Appendix for examples of hand washing station structures.

Public Education

Providing public information is a critical element to effectively minimize the risk of transmission of enteric pathogens at petting zoos, animal exhibits or other areas where the public may have contact with farm animals and their environment.

Signs should be posted at several locations in animal exhibit and contact areas advising of appropriate methods and behaviors to reduce the risk of disease transmission including:

- Wash hands with soap and water after touching animals, their enclosures or food containers; being licked or spat on by animals; and when having any contact with animal bedding or feces.
- Do not eat or drink in animal areas.
- Always wash hands before drinking eating, smoking or preparing foods.
- Restrict children from climbing on corrals, pens and animal enclosures.
- Toys, pacifiers, blanket and other personal items can become contaminated – keep them away from animal areas. Wash contaminated items before returning to children.
- Young children need assistance in washing hands.

(Refer to Appendix).

Barn supervisors and tour guides should point out the signs to visitors and emphasize hand washing. Friendly hand washing reminder signs can be posted at exits to animal exhibit areas and petting zoos.

Signs should be provided in animal exhibit areas that direct visitors and animal handlers to the location of adjacent hand wash stations.

Hand washing signs should be posted at the hand washing stations and at restroom lavatories to ensure proper hand washing practices. The placement of hand washing reminder signs at food concession areas is recommended. (see Appendix for Hand Wash sign sample).

Additional public information is strongly recommended for facilities that have school, preschool or daycare groups that visit animal exhibits. These programs should include educational materials to adults who supervise visits. Fair managers or administrative staff is encouraged to develop and implement a public education component to be used in conjunction with animal visits that includes providing public health literature and educational programs. (A sample brochure provided with the Appendix materials).

Maintaining Animal Areas

- Remove and dispose of animal manure appropriately (several times a day).
- Replace animal bedding daily.
- Clean visible fecal material from any surface with soap and water.
- Do not display ill animals or those known to be positive for infectious agents.
- Prevent contact with manure, water troughs and animals that should not be touched by providing barriers and controlling access to areas where visitors should not go.

Other practices

- Locate eating areas away from animal areas.
- Exclude all animals from eating areas.
- Keep eating areas clean.
- Do not serve unpasteurized milk or milk products to visitors.

These guidelines are based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and have been developed with support from publications by the Washington Department of Health and Puyallup Fair, Washington. We encourage you to review the operation and maintenance of your facilities with these recommendations in mind and to initiate the necessary control and preventative measures to reduce the public health risks associated with animal exhibits and petting zoos.

Guidelines for Reducing Disease at Petting Zoos, Animal Exhibits
or Other Contact Areas

Page 5

If you have any questions, please contact the Department of Health Services,
Division of Communicable Disease Control, Veterinary Public Health Section at
(916) 327-0332 or Carol Fitzgerald, Environmental Health Services Section, at
(916) 327-0560.